

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

South Alabama Loses One of Our Own in Afghanistan

Early last week, we received the tragic news that one of south Alabama's own – U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Mark Stratton – was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated as his convoy was passing.

Mark grew up in Foley and graduated from Foley High School. He received his commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps a year after his graduation from Texas A & M University.

His wife, Jennifer, and three young children are currently living in Washington, D.C. where he was assigned to the Joint Staff at the Pentagon before he was deployed to Afghanistan in November.

Mark was the commander of the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team, which was building a road to provide access to an isolated mountain region northeast of Kabul.

In conversations with his friends and family, it was mentioned time and again that Mark was someone who loved God, loved his family, and loved the Air Force, and he was someone who certainly loved the country he served until the very end.

A fellow Air Force officer and close friend described him as a superb but humble leader. Mark's commendations include a Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Mark's family and friends during the coming days, weeks, and months as they grieve over the loss of their beloved Mark.

The loss of Lt. Col. Stratton – especially on Memorial Day – is a reminder that our men and women in combat are in constant danger, and we should keep them and all of our armed forces in our thoughts and prayers every day of the year.

Hurricane Season Begins June 1

The 2009 hurricane season officially begins this Monday, June 1, and lasts until November 30.

Experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center are predicting a near-normal hurricane season this year.

Forecasters say there is a 70 percent chance of having nine to 14 named storms, of which four to seven could become hurricanes, including one to three major hurricanes.

However, as with any hurricane season, the need to prepare for the possibility of a storm striking near you is essential, and it is never too soon to start making preparations in the event a hurricane comes our way.

As you know, each of the First District's six counties is at risk of being impacted by a hurricane or tropical storm. It is critical that you and your family plan ahead and know the steps you should take before, during, and after any natural disaster. Remember, you can never be too prepared.

First responders might not be able to reach every single person within the first day following a disaster. You and your family need to be prepared to sustain yourselves for up to 72 hours after a hurricane.

You should have an emergency plan for where you can go if you are told to evacuate. I recommend choosing several places such as a friend's home in another town, a motel, or a shelter.

Let me also encourage you to prepare a disaster supply kit, containing items such as water (at least one gallon per person, per day), food (including non-perishable and canned items), a can opener, paper plates and utensils, blankets and pillows, clothing, first aid with medicines and prescription drugs, toiletries, flashlight with batteries, battery operated radio, fully charged cell phone with an extra battery, cash, keys, toys, important documents in a waterproof container or waterproof plastic bag, and insurance documents.

For more information on hurricane preparedness, you can visit NOAA's website, <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2>

Please remember that as we head into this hurricane season, my office and I stand ready to assist you. You can reach us toll free at 1-800-288-8721, and we'll be glad to do all we can to be helpful.

Find Us on Facebook

In an effort to continue to provide the constituents of Alabama's First District with improved online service and information, we have recently unveiled my official page on Facebook.

I encourage you to become a supporter of my page so you can continue to stay up-to-date on what I am working on in Washington and throughout southwest Alabama.

This is part of my office's ongoing efforts to expand constituent outreach and utilize newer technology to share information with you.

Please take a moment, and find us on Facebook. There is a link to my Facebook page on my website.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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For release the week of Monday, June 01, 2009. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.